



John Smith

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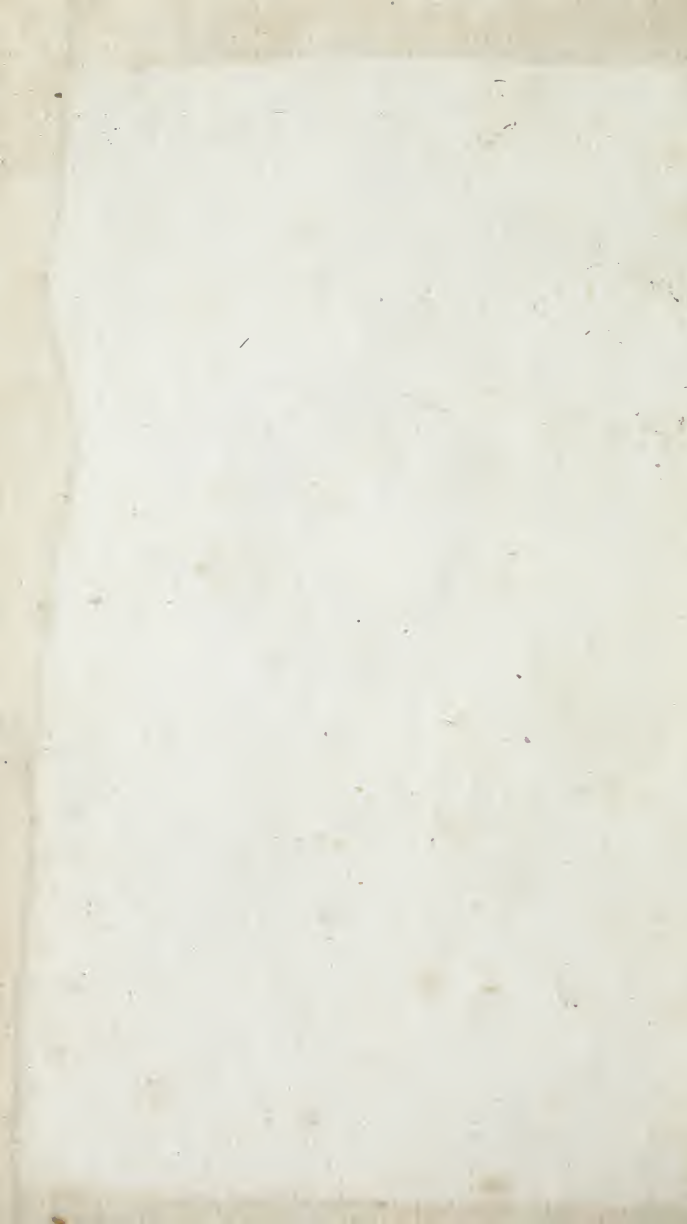


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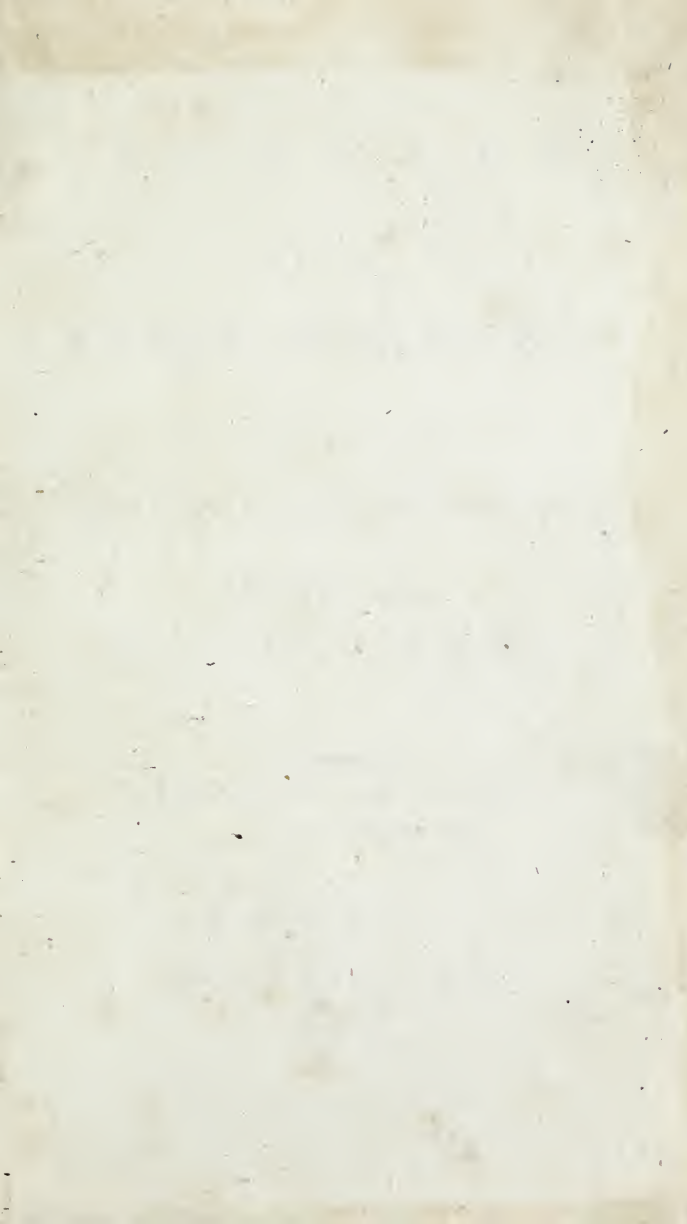
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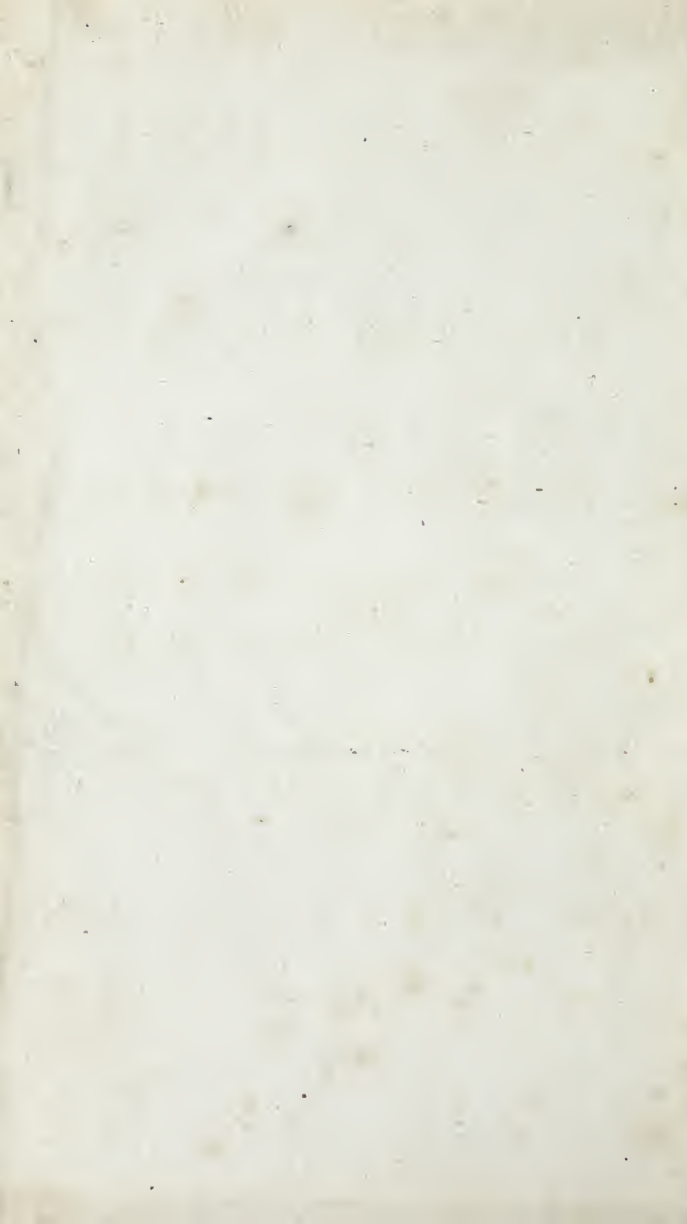
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L E T T E R S

ON THE

ITALIAN OPERA:

ADDRESSED TO

The Hon. Lord MONBODDO.

BY THE LATE

Mr. JOHN BROWN.

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SECOND EDITION.

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L O N D O N:

Sold by T. CADELL, Strand.

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## E R R A T A.

- P. 9. l. 11. *for* Il volarmi *read* Involarmi.  
P. 63. l. 14. *for* te *read* ti.  
Ibid. l. 15. *for* l'ammiro *read* t'ammiro.  
Ibid. l. 16. *for* te *read* ti.  
P. 80. l. 11. *for* Their *read* Here.  
P. 91. l. 5. *for* miè *read* mi è.  
P. 92. l. 3. *for* carefully *read* carelessly.  
P. 99. l. 2. *for* cambio *read* cambiò.  
Ibid. l. 13 *for* there *read* thou.  
P. 102. l. 10. *for* smanie *read* smania.  
P. 106. l. 7. *for* ascoltar *read* ascoltai. |  
P. 126. l. 6. *for* affected *read* effected.  
P. 133. l. 1. *for* le *read* la.  
Ibid. l. 3. *for* aquista *read* acquista.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**T**HIS little piece is the composition of one of the greatest artists that ever was in Scotland; who, besides his superior excellence in his profession, which was *Drawing*, the principal part of Painting, was very learned in all the Italian Arts; and particularly in their Poetry and Music, the subject of this little work, more learned, I believe, than any man in Great Britain.

As

As Beauty is pretty much the same in all the Fine Arts, there being a cognation, as Cicero expresses it, by which they are connected and related more or less to one another, Mr Brown has shown, in this work, that he knew very well what Beauty was in Writing as well as in other Arts; for there is in his style a copiousness and elegance, and withal an accuracy of expression, which are seldom to be met with in the compositions of this age; and, both for matter and style, I will venture to set this little piece against any thing that has been written on the subject of the Fine Arts



Arts in modern times ; and, I am persuaded, it would have been still more perfect in every respect, if he had lived to publish it himself. He has explained most accurately every thing belonging to the Italian Opera, beginning with the *Recitative*, by which the business or action of the Opera, the principal thing in all dramatic performances, is carried on ; and then proceeding to the *Airs* or *Songs*, by which the sentiments and passions of the *Dramatis Personae* are expressed. These *Airs* he has divided and explained so accurately as to show very clearly ‘ that there is no affection of the  
‘ human

‘ human breast,’ (to use his own words, and I cannot use better),  
 ‘ from the slightest and most gentle stirring of sentiment, to the  
 ‘ most frantic degree of passion,  
 ‘ which some one of these classes’ (of *Airs*) ‘ is not aptly suited to  
 ‘ express \*.’ He has also shown how the descriptive part in the Opera is executed, and of what good use the Orchestra is there, which is so indiscreetly employed in the British Operas †. In this passage, he has very justly censured our taste in Operas. And, in another

\* Letter 8. in the beginning.

† Page 88. 89.

nother passage \*, he has said, that  
‘ the admiration bestowed in Bri-  
‘ tain on difficulty and novelty, in  
‘ preference to beauty and simpli-  
‘ city, is the effect, not of the de-  
‘ cline, but of the total want of  
‘ taste, and proceeds from the same  
‘ principles with the admiration of  
‘ tumbling and rope-dancing, which  
‘ the multitude may gaze on with  
‘ astonishment, long before they  
‘ are susceptible of the charms of  
‘ graceful and elegant Pantomime,  
‘ these feats of agility having ex-  
‘ actly the same relation to fine  
‘ dancing

\* Page 115. 116.

‘ dancing that the above mentioned  
 ‘ *Airs* have to expressive Music.’  
 And, in the same passage, he observes, that this admiration of the new and difficult, which begins to prevail in Italy, is a symptom of the decline of the Arts there; so that he appears to me to have had a taste, not only superior to what is to be found in Britain, but even to the taste at present in Italy, the country of the Fine Arts; and I have heard from others, as well as from him, that the builetta, and the taste for the ridiculous, is prevailing very much in Italy, than which there can be no surer sign of  
 the

the decline of genius and taste in a nation. But the serious Italian Opera, as he has described it, and as it is acted in Rome, though it may not be so perfect as it formerly was, is still the most perfect junction of Poetry, Music, and Action, (or Dancing, as the ancients called it, which, among them, was an Art of Imitation, as well as Poetry and Music), the three finest of the Fine Arts, that is now to be found in the world, and such as only can give us any idea of *Attic Tragedies, of stateliest and most regal argument*, (to use an expression of Milton), with which that  
learned

learned and elegant people were so much delighted, and, upon the representation of which they bestowed the greatest part of the revenue of their state. This work, therefore, of Mr Brown, will give great pleasure, not only to the Connoisseurs in Music, but also, I hope, to all the admirers of ancient Arts; and I am sure that all those who were acquainted with him, and knew him to be a man of great worth as well as genius, will be very glad to encourage this publication for the benefit of his widow and child.

L E T.

*Some Account of the* AUTHOR.

**M**R. BROWN was a native of Edinburgh, and was early destined to take up the profession of a painter. He travelled into Italy, and at Rome met with Sir William Young and Mr. Townley, who, pleased with some very beautiful drawings done by him in pen and ink, took him with them, as a draftsman, into Sicily. Of the antiquities of this celebrated island he took several very fine views in pen and ink, exquisitely finished, yet still

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preserving the character and spirit of  
 the buildings he intended to represent.  
 He returned some years afterwards from  
 Italy to his native town, where he was  
 much beloved and esteemed by many men  
 of letters, and by many women of ele-  
 gance; his conversation being extreme-  
 ly acute and entertaining on most sub-  
 jects, but peculiarly so on those of art;  
 and his knowledge of music being very  
 great, and his taste in it extremely just  
 and refined. Lord Monboddo, with  
 that liberality which has ever charac-  
 terized him, gave him a general invita-  
 tion to his elegant and convivial table,  
 and employed him in making several  
 drawings in pencil for him. Mr. Brown,  
 however, in the year 1786, came to  
 London (that great emporium of ta-  
 lents



lents and abilities), and was greatly caressed by scholars and men of taste in that metropolis, where he was very much employed as a painter of small portraits in black lead pencil, which were always correctly drawn, and exhibited, with a picturesque fidelity, the features and character of the person who sat to him. It is much to be lamented that the public could make little use of his talents, death depriving the public of this very ingenious artist in 1787, after a disease of great languor, which he bore with that firmness of mind for which he had been ever distinguished through life.

Mr. Brown was not only known as an exquisite draftsman, he was also a good philosopher, a sound scholar, and endowed

dowed with a just and refined taste in all the liberal and polite Arts, and a man of consummate worth and integrity. Soon after his death these Letters on the Poety and Music of the Italian Opera, were first published for the benefit of his widow. They were originally written to his friend Lord Monboddo, who wished to have Mr. Brown's opinion on those subjects, which have so intimate a connection with his work on the Origin and Progress of Language; and who was so pleased with the style and observations contained in them, that he wrote an Introduction to them. The Letters are written with great elegance and perspicuity; they are most certainly the production of a strong and fervid mind, acquainted with the subject; and must be

be of infinite utility to most of the frequenters of the Italian Opera, by enabling them to understand the reasons on which the pleasure they receive at that musical performance is founded. They were most assuredly not written for publication : they have, therefore, that spirit and simplicity which every man of genius diffuses through any subject of which he treats, and which he is but too apt to refine away, when he seriously sits down to compose a work for the Public. Lord Monboddo, in the fourth Volume of the Origin and Progress of language, speaking of Mr. Brown, says, " The account that I have given of the Italian language is taken from one who resided above ten years in Italy ; and who, besides understanding the language

guage perfectly, is more learned in the Italian Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Music, and Poetry, than any man I ever met with. His natural good taste he has improved by the study of the monuments of ancient Art, to be seen at Rome and Florence; and as beauty in all the Arts is pretty much the same, consisting of grandeur and simplicity, variety, decorum, and a suitableness to the subject, I think he is a good judge of Language, and of Writing, as well as of Painting, Sculpture, and Music." Mr. Brown left behind him several very high finished Portraits in pencil, and many very exquisite Sketches in pencil and in pen and ink, which he had taken of persons and of places in Italy; particularly a book of Studies of Heads,

taken

taken from the life, an inestimable treasure to any History Painter, as it would have served him as a common-place-book for his pictures, the heads it contained being all of them Italian ones, of great expression, or of high character. He was so enraptured with his Art, and so assiduous in the pursuit of it, that he suffered no countenance of beauty, grace, dignity, or expression to pass him unnoticed; and to be enabled to possess merely a sketch for himself, of any subject that struck his fancy, he would make a present of a high-finished drawing to the person who permitted his head to be taken by him. The characteristics of his hand were delicacy, correctness, and taste, (as the drawings he made from many of Mr. Townley's  
best



best statues very plainly evince.) Of his mind, the leading features were acuteness, liberality, and sensibility, joined to a character firm, vigorous, and energetic. The last efforts of this ingenious Artist were employed in making two very exquisite drawings, the one from Mr. Townley's celebrated bust of Homer, the other from a fine original bust of Mr. Pope, in general supposed to have been the work of Rysbrac. From these drawings two very beautiful engravings have been made by Mr. Bartolozzi and his pupil Mr. Bovi.

LET-

## LETTER I.

MY LORD,

**I**N order to give your Lordship a distinct idea, not only of the various kinds of verse made use of by the Italians in their Opera, but of the principles also by which the application of that variety is directed, I find it necessary to take into consideration the union of poetry and music, which is

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peculiar to this species of drama. The nature of this union seems to have been well understood by their best dramatic writers, and they have seldom lost sight of it in their works; whilst those of our poets, who have written Cantatas or other compositions for music, appear either to have been not at all acquainted with it, or, if they were, to have totally disregarded it. The Italians have, with great propriety, considered, that the speeches in the drama, whether in dialogue or soliloquy, must be either such as are expressive of passion and sentiment, or such as are not so. On this real distinction, and not, as with us, on the mere caprice of the composer, is founded

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ed their first great division of vocal music into *recitative* and *air*. It is evident, on the slightest consideration, that, in the progress of the drama, many passages must necessarily occur, such as simple narration of facts, directions given, plain answers made to plain questions, sometimes abstract truths or moral reflections ;—none of which, as they contain nothing of passion or sentiment, can ever become the subject of musical expression. Simply to have spoken these passages, however, and then abruptly to have set up a singing, when any pathetic part presented itself, would have produced exactly that barbarous jumble of prose and poetry, of music and dissonance, which

which characterizes the English comic opera. To avoid this, and, at the same time, not idly to bestow the charms of fancy and feeling, where embellishment and expression would be improper, the Italians have invented that species of singing termed by them *simple recitative*. Its name almost sufficiently explains its nature: It is a succession of notes so arranged as to coincide with the laws of harmony, tho' never accompanied but by a single instrument, whose office is merely to support the voice, and to direct it in its modulations. Though, for the sake of this accompaniment, recitative is, like other music, divided into bars, yet are not these bars, as in other music,

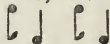
music, necessarily of equal lengths; the notes of which they are composed being subjected to no precise musical measure, but regulated, in this respect, almost wholly by the natural prosody of the language. Thus, this kind of recitative answers completely its end: It detains the audience very little longer than the spoken recital would do; and, being music itself, the transition from it to the higher and more interesting parts is perfectly natural, and agreeable to the ear\*.

The

\* According to your Lordship's opinion that there is scarcely any such thing as long and short syllables in modern languages, the notes of the Italian recitative would be all  
of

The verse appropriated to recitative is of a mixed kind, consisting of the heroic

of equal lengths. To obviate this objection, I must take notice, that what your Lordship would call the *accented* syllable, they esteem the *long* one; and whatever may be the case in speech, in pronouncing the recitative, they most certainly render it longer, in the proportion, generally, of *two* to *one*. Thus, the words *ămō*, *tălōr*, *cēdē*, *fīnī*, *törnāi*, in which the accent is laid on the last syllable, are, in recitative, positively iambics, the first syllable being expressed by a quaver, the other by a crotchet, thus, *ămō*, *tălōr*, &c. the last of

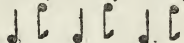


which characters is the sign of a duration of time, exactly double the length of that denoted by the first. Those again which have the ac-

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heroic line of eleven syllables, and of  
a line of seven syllables, with now and  
then

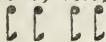
cent on the first syllable, as *āmō*, *bēnē*, *ciēlō*,



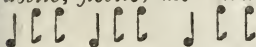
*trōmbă*, are trochaics. All the Articles of



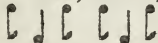
two syllables, such as *delle*, *alli*, &c. and the  
Pronouns personal when joined with another  
monosyllable, such as *mene*, *celo*, *vela*, *tissi*,  
*glielo*, &c. may, with the strictest propriety,  
be considered as each a pyrrhic foot, which,  
in recitative, would accordingly be expressed  
by two quavers, *mēnē*, *cēlō*, &c. The words



*dōcīlē*, *flēbīlē*, *mōrmōră*, are thus real dactyles,



whilst such as these again, *tīmōrē*, *ōnōrē*, &c.



are,

then a rhyme. In the intermingling, however, these lines with each other, as

are, to all intents and purposes, each a foot, consisting of a short, a long, and a short syllable. Nay, I may go so far as to say, that no species of foot occurs in the ancient poetry which is not frequently to be found in the Italian recitative, in which three successive short, three successive long syllables, and often four of each are to be found, and, indeed, all the possible varieties in which long and short syllables can be combined together. Now, though it be allowed that the Italian verse is formed, not by the number of feet, but of syllables, it is fair to conclude, that this manner of reciting it, by which not only various combinations of them are formed, but their respective length and brevity positively ascer-

as well as with respect to the introduction of the rhymes, the poet is entirely left to the guidance of his own ear and sentiment. This kind of mixed verse, from the variety of the cadences which it affords, seems well calculated to give to the recitative as marked a resemblance to common speech as is consistent with the dignity and beauty of numbers; whilst the sparing and judicious introduction of rhyme, either to finish more highly some beautiful passage, or more strongly to point some remarkable assertion or

B reflection,

ascertained, must not only give additional beauty and variety to the verse, but render the pronunciation itself more clear and explicit.



reflection, serves to preserve throughout the piece a proper degree of unity of effect, by preventing that irksome and unnatural dissimilarity between the recitative and the airs, which would, in some degree, be the consequence of the want of this kind of medium. Upon the whole, it appears admirably well suited to the less important parts of a production so refined and artificial as the Opera, whose object, like that of the arts of painting and sculpture amongst the ancients, is not so much the exact imitation of nature, as the union in as high a degree as possible of what is beautiful with what is natural.

LETTER



## L E T T E R II.

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MY LORD,

**I**N the former sheets I have endeavoured to explain to your Lordship the nature of simple recitative, and to describe the kind of verse appropriated to it. I proceed now to treat of the higher parts of vocal music, those, namely, which are adapted to the more interesting and pathetic passages of the drama. With respect to these,

these, distinctions have been likewise made by the Italians, which seem perfectly well founded. They must, in the first place, have observed, that all those passages in which the mind of the speaker is agitated by a rapid succession of various emotions, are, from their nature, incompatible with any particular strain, or length of melody; for that which constitutes such particular strain is the relation of several parts to one whole. Now, it is this whole which the Italians distinguish by the name of *motivo*, which may be translated *strain*, or *subject of the air*, and which they conceive to be inconsistent with the brevity and desultory sense of those ejaculations, which are  
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the effect of a high degree of agitation. Air they think even inadmissible in those passages, in which, though the emotions be not various, yet the sentences are broken and incoherent. To give an instance: The following speech, tho' terror be uniformly expressed by the whole of it, seems not at all a subject fit to be comprehended under, or expressed by one regular strain:

Bring me unto my trial when you will.—  
 Dy'd he not in his bed?—Where should he die?  
 Oh! torture me no more—I will confess.—  
 Alive again!—then shew me where he is;  
 I'll give a thousand pounds to look on him.  
 —He hath no eyes;—the dust hath blinded  
 them—

Comb

Comb down his hair—look ! look ! it stands upright

Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul.—

Give me some drink, &c.——

SHAKESPEARE'S *Henry VI.*

But, whilst the Italians conceived such passages to be incompatible with that regularity of measure, and that unity of strain which is essential to air, they felt, however, that they were of all others the most proper subject for musical expression : And, accordingly, both the poet and musician seem, by mutual consent, to have bestowed on such passages their chief study ; and the musician, in particular, never fails to exert on them his highest and most brilliant

brilliant powers. It is to them they adapt that species of recitative termed *recitativo istrumentato*, or *recitativo obbligato*, — *accompanied recitative*. In this kind of recitative the singer is, in a more special manner, left to the dictates of his own feelings and judgment with respect to the measure: He must not indeed reverse the natural prosody of the language, by making short what should be long, or *vice versa*; but he may not only proportionally lengthen the duration of each syllable, but he may give to particular syllables what length he pleases, and precipitate considerably the pronunciation of others, just as he thinks the expression requires. The march of the  
notes

notes is very different in this from that of the common or simple recitative; delicacy, pathos, force, dignity, according to the different expressions of the words, are its characteristics. It is in this species of song that the finest effects of the chromatic, and, as far as our system of musical intervals is susceptible of it, even of the enharmonic scale, are peculiarly felt; and it is here also that the powers of modulation are most happily, because most properly, employed, by changes of tone analogous to the variety of the matter, in a wonderful manner enforcing and characterizing the transitions which are made from one subject or emotion to another. Here, too, the whole orchestra lends

lends its aid ; nor are the instruments limited to the simple duty of supporting and directing the voice. In this high species of recitative it is the peculiar province of the instrumental parts, during those pauses which naturally take place between the bursts of passion which a mind strongly agitated breaks into, to produce such sounds as serve to awake in the audience sensations and emotions similar to those which are supposed to agitate the speaker. Here, again, another fine distinction is made by the Italians, between the descriptive and the pathetic powers of music. These last are proper to the voice, the former to the orchestra alone. Thus, the symphonies which accompany this

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kind



kind of recitative, besides the general analogy they must have to the immediate sentiments, and even to the character, of the speaker, are often particularly descriptive of the place in which he is, or of some other concomitant circumstance which may serve to heighten the effect of the speech itself. Suppose, for example, the scene to be a prison; the symphonies, whilst they accord with the general tenor of the words, will paint, if I may be allowed the expression, the horrors of the dungeon itself:—And I can assure your Lordship that I have heard symphonies of this kind strongly expressive of such horrors. Again, suppose the scene by moon-light and the general tone of  
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the passion plaintive, the sweetness, the serenity, and, (though to those, who have never experienced the effects of music in this degree, it may seem paradoxical to say so), even the solitude, nay, the silence of the scene, would make part of the ideas suggested by the symphonies. Should a storm be introduced, the skilful composer would contrive to make the rain beat, and the tempest howl most fearfully, by means of the orchestra: Nay, in a scene such as that of the dying Beaufort, which I have quoted above\* to your Lordship, the musician, following close the wild ravings of the speaker, would, during the pauses of the speech,

\* Page 13.

speech, call forth from the instruments such sounds as would thrill with terror the audience, by realizing, in a manner, to their sense and feeling, the horrible apprehensions of his distracted mind. But the combined powers of melody and harmony are never more effectually felt than when, in this kind of recitative, they are employed to mark some very striking transition. In a scene of madness, for example, where the imagination of the speaker is supposed to start from a gloomy desert to flowery meads, the orchestra would, by an immediate change of measure, of melody, of harmony, perhaps of sounds too, mark the transition—would proceed to spread out the smiling landscape, to adorn it with gayest flowers,

to

to awake the zephyr, and, in short, give to the audience, by means of a wonderful analogy of sounds, the most lively representation of the new image which is supposed to have taken possession of the madman's mind.—These are effects of what I have ventured to call the Descriptive, or Imitative, powers of music. With respect to the transitions of passion, such as from tenderness to jealousy, from joy to anger, &c. these belong to the Pathetic powers of music, and are the peculiar province of the vocal part. Often, in the middle of a very agitated Recitative, on the occurrence of some tender idea, on which the mind is supposed to dwell with a kind of melancholy pleasure,

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the music loses, by degrees, the irregular character of Recitative, and resolves gradually into the even measure and continued melody of Air,—then, on a sudden, at the call of some idea of an opposite nature, breaks off again into its former irregularity. This change from Recitative to Air, and thence to Recitative again, never fails, when properly introduced, to have a very striking and beautiful effect. Whilst it is the business of the orchestra thus closely to accompany the sentiments and situation of the singer, the actor, in his turn, as there is no note without a meaning, must be continually attentive to the orchestra: During those intervals, in which the instruments may be  
said.

said to speak, his action must be in strick concert with the music; every thing must tend to the same point; so that the poet, the musician, the actor, must all seem to be informed by one soul.—If your Lordship, to the natural voice of passion, and the proper and graceful expression of action, imagines, thus united, the intrinsic charm of sound itself, and the wonderful powers of melody and harmony, I hope you will join with me in opinion, that the effect produced by such union is much richer, much more beautiful, much more powerful and affecting, than any that can be produced by simple declamation. Though, in passages of this description, the language ought

certainly

certainly to rise with the subject, yet the verse which is here made use of, is of the same kind with that employed in the common Recitative, as being that which has the greatest variety, and suffers the fewest restrictions, and, as such, the best adapted to the irregular nature of such passages.—Having thus endeavoured to explain to your Lordship the nature of *recitative, simple and accompanied*, of those distinctions on which they are respectively founded, and of the species of verse in which they are written, I proceed to treat of Air, and of the different kinds of versification which are employed in it. As to the principles which direct the choice in adapting particular measures to particular



particular airs, I shall have nothing to say, they being exactly the same with those by which the lyric poet adapts the verse to the various subject of an ode;—the heroic to the grave and sublime;—that which still partakes of dignity, though rather smooth than grand, to the tender and pathetic;—that which is more violent and unequal, to the highly impassioned parts;—and that which is of the airy dancing kind, to the lighter and more lively passages of the piece: Distinctions, which, it may be observed, are evidently consequences of the original union of poetry and music.

I am well aware, that great part of what I have here said of the power of

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the Italian music would, to many, perhaps to most people, appear the language rather of enthusiasm than of any thing else : Perhaps it partly is so ; for my own feelings, on the authority alone of which I speak, may, in some degree, proceed from enthusiasm. Whether this be the case, or whether the effects I mention be completely real, but take place in consequence of certain sensibilities, so partially distributed among mankind, that, perhaps, even the lesser number are susceptible of these effects, I do not presume to determine. If this last be the case, (and there is no absurdity in supposing it to be so), it is evident, however, that those who profess so great a degree of sensibility to  
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the powers of music, will be very apt to appear affected and enthusiastic to the rest of mankind, who are, surely, in some degree, justified for calling in question the existence of pleasures to which, possessing the same organs, all in seeming equal perfection, they find themselves perfect strangers: Whilst, on the other hand, those who acknowledge the power of music, will think they have a complete right to assert the reality of that of which they have so feeling a conviction. For my own part, I am firmly persuaded, that what I have ventured to advance to your Lordship touching the effects of music, is not at all exaggerated with respect to the feelings of thousands besides myself:

self: Nay, it is my opinion, that, were musical entertainments arrived to that degree of perfection to which they might be brought, they could not fail of producing effects much more powerful than any I ever had an opportunity of experiencing.

LETTER

## LETTER III.

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MY LORD,

**R**ECITATIVE and Air may be considered as *genera* in music, and the different kinds of each as *species*.

What I have already had the honour of submitting to your Lordship's perusal, on the subject of Recitative, may serve partly to explain the nature of Air. All those passages where the  
transi-

transition from one emotion to another is sudden and violent, and which, therefore, can neither, on account of their brevity, make each a whole of itself, nor, by reason of their variety, be made parts of the same whole, are expressed in Recitative. Those, on the other hand, in which one sentiment pervades a whole sentence composed of different parts, become proper subjects for Air; and, indeed, every complete musical strain may, with great justness, be termed a sentence or period in melody.—Before proceeding to speak of the different kinds of Airs, it may not be improper to say something of the Symphony by which they are in general preceded. This Sym-  
phony

phony is the enunciation, by the orchestra, of the strain or subject, what the Italians call the *motivo* of the Air; and when not improperly introduced, (which it always is when the sense admits not of any pause), serves several useful purposes;—it gives time to the finger to breathe, already, perhaps, fatigued by a long recitative;—it often fills up, with propriety, a natural pause, and always finely prepares the audience for what is to come after, by enabling them, having thus once heard the strain, to listen with more intelligence, and, of consequence, with more interest and pleasure to the song. Besides, the general *use* of the Symphony, renders the *omission* of it, on particular  
occa-

occasions, beautiful and striking.— Thus, for example, at the end of a Recitative, or at the beginning of a scene, when the audience are expecting, as usual, the preparatory Symphony to the Air, they are suddenly surprised by the violent burst of some impetuous passion, which admitted of no possible pause. The propriety of having, in such a circumstance, omitted the Symphony, comes forcibly on the mind, as, *vice versa*, the effect of the omission here confirms the propriety of using it where the sense allows it to be introduced. Sometimes, again, the Symphony is omitted in a very different manner, tho' with equal propriety: When, for instance, in an accompa-

nied

nied recitative, after a fucceffion of very different emotions, fome fentiment is fupposed to take poffeffion of the mind, related to that which is to be the fubje&t of the Air, and to which it is afterwards led by a gradation of kindred emotions:—The progreff, in this cafe, from Recitative to Air, is fo gentle, that the audience frequently find themfelves melting into tears at the affecting and continued melody of the Air, before they are aware that the Recitative is ended. This imperceptible tranfition is effected fometime by fubjecting the recitative itfelf to mufical meafure, and making the notes of it, by degrees, take a refemblance to thofe of the Air. At other times,

E it



it is brought about by introducing, in the instrumental parts, during the pauses of the Recitative, passages of the strain which is to make the subject of the Air: Sometimes by both these means. The effect of this gradual transition is always very fine, and, as your Lordship will observe, is, in part, derived from that habitual distinction which the audience are accustomed to make between Recitative and Air.—As to the Airs themselves, your Lordship will conceive that they are as various as their subjects. These are every possible sentiment, affection, or passion, the expression of which is extended through one sentence of a certain length; such sentences as these,—*I*  
*love*



*love—I fear his wrath—I mourn her loss*—though all proper subjects for musical expression, being evidently too short to afford matter for a strain or melody, which, however simple, must still be composed of parts, the relations of which to one another, and to one whole, constitute, indeed, the essence of such strain.—The Air, though it must contain at least one complete sentence, is not, however, limited to one alone: It is often composed of two, sometimes of more parts; but these, whether related by analogy or by contrast to the principal one, must each strictly belong to the same whole. The *Airs* are divided, by the Italians, into certain classes; these classes are  
origi-

originally founded on real distinctions, drawn from the nature of the various affections of the mind ; but musicians, who, like other artists, are seldom philosophers, have distinguished them by names relative to the practice of their own profession.—The principal are the following :

*Aria Cantabile*,—by pre-eminence so called, as if it alone were Song : And, indeed, it is the only kind of song which gives the singer an opportunity of displaying at once, and in the highest degree, all his powers, of whatever description they be. The proper subjects for this Air are sentiments of tenderness.

*Aria*

*Aria di portamento*,—a denomination expressive of the carriage, (as they thus call it), of the voice. This kind of Air is chiefly composed of long notes, such as the finger can dwell on, and have, thereby, an opportunity of more effectually displaying the beauties, and calling forth the powers of his voice; for the beauty of sound itself, and of voice in particular, as being the finest of all sounds, is held, by the Italians, to be one of the chief sources of the pleasure we derive from music. The subjects proper for this Air are sentiments of dignity.

*Aria di mezzo carattere*.—Your Lordship can be at no loss to understand  
this

this term; though I know no words in our language by which I could properly translate it. It is a species of Air, which, though expressive neither of the dignity of this last, nor of the pathos of the former, is, however, serious and pleasing.

*Aria parlante*,—speaking Air, is that which, from the nature of its subject, admits neither of long notes in the composition, nor of many ornaments in the execution. The rapidity of the motion of this Air is proportioned to the violence of the passion which is expressed by it. This species of Air goes sometimes by the name of *aria di nota e parola*, and likewise of *aria agitata*;  
but

but these are rather sub-divisions of the species, and relate to the different degrees of violence of the passion expressed.

*Aria di bravura, aria di agilita*,—is that which is composed *chiefly*, indeed, too often, *merely* to indulge the finger in the display of certain powers in the execution, particularly extraordinary agility or compass of voice. Though this kind of air may be sometimes introduced with some effect, and without any great violation of propriety, yet, in general, the means are here confounded with the end.

*Rondo*

*Rondo*—is a term of French origin, unknown, I believe, till of late to the Italian musicians. It relates merely to a certain peculiarity in the construction of the song, in which the composer, after having properly established the subject, carries it through a variety of tones, every now and then returning to the principal strain or part, and always concluding with it.

*Cavatina*—is an expression which likewise relates to the form alone, meaning an Air of one part, without repetition.

These, to the best of my remembrance, are the classes into which the Italians have divided Air.

I shall now say something of each class; and, in doing so, I hope to give your Lordship some idea of the great extent as well as precision of the Italian music, and to show, that, though the names of these classes be evidently taken from circumstances of practice, yet these circumstances, if properly attended to, will be found to be strictly connected with, and, indeed, to originate from distinctions of a higher kind, which must have been previously made with respect to the nature of the passions, and their effect on utterance and expression. Whether the Italian composers, in observing these distinctions, have been guided by some system, or have been merely influenced

F by



by feeling, I cannot take upon me to say. I am rather, however, inclined to think that the latter is the case; in the first place, because I never heard of any such system existing among them, and, because I have been personally acquainted with several of their finest composers now living, that had no idea of it; and, again, because I think, that, to the want of such a system can be alone attributed the gross deviations (which, even in the works of their greatest masters, are sometimes to be met with), from its most obvious and most essential principles.

L E T T E R



# LETTER IV.

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MY LORD,

**T**HE *aria cantabile* is emphatically so called, as being the highest species of Song. It is that indeed which affords the singer an opportunity of displaying, in the execution of it, all his powers and skill;—if he has voice, if he has feeling, if he has taste, if he has fancy, if he has science—here he has ample scope for the exertion

tion of them all. The subject proper for this air is the expression of tenderness. Though this be an expression which always tends to sadness, yet the sadness is of that pleasing kind which the mind loves to indulge: Thus, the memory of pleasures that are past, the complaints of a lover absent from his *faithful* mistress, and such like, are proper themes for this air. Hence it arises, that the *aria cantabile*, whilst it is susceptible of great pathos, admits, without prejudice to the expression, of being highly ornamented; for this plain reason, that, though the sentiments it expresses are affecting, they are, at the same time, such as the mind dwells on with pleasure; and it is like-

wise

wise for this reason that the subject of the *cantabile* must never border on deep distress, nor approach to violent agitation, both of which are evidently inconsistent with ornament. The motion of this air, though not so solemn as that which belongs to still graver subjects, is very slow, and its constituent notes, of consequence, proportionally long; I say *constituent notes*, in order to distinguish those which the finger introduces as ornamental from those which constitute the melody itself. These last are, in general, very few, extremely simple in their march, and so arranged as to allow great latitude to the skill of the finger. The instrumental parts are, in this kind of song, restricted to  
almost

almost nothing; for, though the accompaniment is of use to the finger because it supports the voice, yet ought it to be kept so subordinate to the vocal part, as never, during the song, to become the object of attention. The finger who attempts the *cantabile* should be endowed, in the first place, with a fine voice, of the sweet and plaintive kind, that the long notes, of which this song is composed, may, of themselves, delight the ear: He ought to have great sensibility, that he may nicely feel and express in an affecting manner the sentiment: He should possess, besides, great taste and fancy, highly to ornament the melody, and, thereby, give to it that elegance which

is

is essential to this kind of song: An accurate judgment is likewise necessary, to keep his fancy within due bounds; and he ought to be a perfect master of the science of counter-point, that he may know precisely what liberties he may take with respect to the harmony of the other parts. As the productions of *science* are, at least in part, justly esteemed by the degree of *utility* which attends them, so those of *art* may be by the degree of *pleasure* they afford. Now, it is the superior degree of pleasure (which proceeds from the joint exertion of so many powers of nature and art in the *aria cantabile*) that gives to it the pre-eminence over every other kind of song; for your Lordship will observe,

observe, that, in listening to an air of this description, though the mind is all awake to feeling, yet are the emotions it experiences of that gentle kind which unfit it neither for the contemplation of beauty, nor for the admiration of art ; on the contrary, they serve to dispose it more effectually for both. Thus, many of the noblest faculties of the mind are gratified at once ; we judge, we admire, we feel, at the same instant of time ; and, I may even say, we are, at the same instant, sensibly feasted ; for there is no doubt but there is a charm, not only in the harmony of sounds, but even in the beauty of sound itself, which acts physically on the machine, and may  
be

be considered as actually producing a sensual gratification. The following are examples of the *cantabile* from Metastasio: In the first, a lover, complaining to his friend of the cruelty of his mistress, concludes the recitative by saying,

Ma quanto, ah, tu nol fai, quant' è tiranna.

But thou knowest not, alas! how unkind she is.

### A I R.

Jo lo so, che il bel sembiante  
Un istante, oh dio, mirai,  
E mai piu da quell 'istante  
Non lasciai di sospirar.



I know it, who, but for a moment, beheld that lovely countenance; and never, from that moment, have ceased to sigh.

Jo lo fo ; lo fanno queſte  
Valli ombroſe, erme foreſte,  
Che han da me quel nome amato,  
Imparato a replicar.

I know it; and theſe ſhady vales, theſe ſolitary woods, which have learned from me to repeat her beloved name, know it alſo.

In this ſecond, a young warrior, about to take leave of his weeping miſtreſs, thus addreſſes her :

Frena le belle lagrime,  
Idolo del mio cor ;

No,

No, per vederti piangere,

Cara, non ò valor ;

Ah non destarmi almeno

Nuovi tumulti in seno ;

Bastano i dolci palpiti

Che vi cagiona amor.

Cease those gentle tears, my soul's idol ; if  
I see thee weep, my fortitude forsakes me.  
Ah, forbear to awake in my bosom new tu-  
mults ; the soft palpitations are sufficient  
which love causes there already.

I have only now to add, on the sub-  
ject of this air, that I should be sorry,  
from what I have said of the ornament  
essential to it, to have given rise to an  
opinion in your Lordship, which the  
general practice of singers is, I own,  
but

but too apt to confirm, namely, that the *cantabile* is little else than a string of flourishes, originating almost entirely in the caprice of the performer. This is very far from being the case: Though the melancholy expressed by the *cantabile* be of that soothing kind which the mind loves to indulge, and is, therefore, not incompatible with some exertions of the fancy, yet are these exertions clearly limited, both with respect to number and quality, by the sense of the words; some admit of more, some of less ornament. The expression of tenderness, as has been already observed, is that which peculiarly characterises this air; and just in proportion as this expression is allied

allied to sentiments of hope or pleasure, or tends rather towards sadness and despondency, it admits more or less of being ornamented.—As to the exact quantum, no precise rules can be given:—This, it is evident, must always depend on the nice judgment of the performer; and it is certain, that, the greater his feeling, and the more correct his taste, the more sparing he will be in the application of embellishments.—Those, he makes use of, will resemble in kind and number; not those ornaments which, without distinction, overload the whole surface of a Gothic building, but those with which the Greeks adorned their architecture, which, in times of the purest taste, were

were never so many as to disguise, in any degree, the appearance of simplicity, nor so prominent as to disturb the symmetry of the great component parts of the edifice. Having mentioned architecture, a very striking analogy presents itself to me between the Corinthian order and the *aria cantabile*.

As in this order it appears evidently to have been the intention of the inventor to unite, as far as they are consistent with each other, beauty and utility; so it seems the object of the *cantabile* to unite, in the same manner, beauty and expression. Thus, elegance and refinement are equally the character of both,—in both have the  
same

same kind of limitation ;—in the former, any thing, however beautiful in itself, that militated against utility, would have been inadmissible ;—in the latter, any ornament, however graceful in itself, that ran counter-to, or, in the least, diminished the expression, would be unpardonable ;—for utility is the first principle of architecture, and expression is the great end of music. This analogy might be carried a great deal farther, but, I am afraid, I have already exhausted your Lordship's patience.

LETTER

The first thing I noticed when I  
 stepped out of the car was the  
 warm, humid air. It felt like a  
 giant hand reaching out to  
 embrace me. I took a deep  
 breath, savoring the scent of  
 tropical flowers and the salty  
 breeze from the ocean. The  
 sun was shining brightly, and  
 the palm trees swayed gently  
 in the breeze. I felt a sense  
 of peace and tranquility that  
 I had never experienced before.  
 The people here were so  
 friendly and welcoming. They  
 greeted me with smiles and  
 warm hugs. I felt like I had  
 found a new home. The  
 food was delicious and so  
 different from what I was used  
 to. I loved every bite. The  
 music was so beautiful, and  
 the dance moves were so  
 graceful. I felt like I was  
 part of something special. I  
 was in the heart of it all, and  
 I felt like I had found a new  
 world.



## L E T T E R V.

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MY LORD,

THE second class of Airs to be considered, is the *aria di portamento*, —a term expressive of a certain way of managing the voice. It means, that the voice must be strongly supported, and artfully managed, through the long notes, of which this air is composed, the motion of which is graver than that of any other species. In the

H

*cantabile*

*cantabile* the notes are also long ; but their march is, in general, gradual and gliding : Here, on the contrary, the intervals ought to be bold, striking, and unexpected. In the former, the gentle dying away,—here, the grand swell of the voice ought to be principally attended to. In short, pathos and elegance are the characteristics of the *cantabile*,—grandeur and sublimity of the *portamento*. The great object, which musicians seem to have had in view in this kind of air, is to give full scope to the voice to display, in the highest degree, its powers and beauties;—as the Italians very emphatically express it, “ *far pompa della voce.*” In the general definition of this air, I  
took

took notice to your Lordship of the high value which the Italians put on the beauty of voice itself; and, indeed, the effect of a powerful, and, at the same time, harmonious voice, in the execution of an air of this kind, is such, as, I believe, must be felt before it can be conceived.

Every sentiment, which proceeds from greatness of mind, or that speaks the admiration of what is itself sublime, is a proper ground-work for this air. The sentiment expressed by it may be accompanied with sensibility, but must be calm, and undisturbed by passion. This being the case, your Lordship will see, that the subject of the *portamento*

*mento* is of a nature too serious and important to admit of that degree of ornament which is essential to the *cantabile*. Like the Doric order in architecture, though it rejects not ornament altogether, yet it must owe its effect chiefly to its simplicity and grandeur. If your Lordship will allow me, in another way, to illustrate the specific difference of these two classes, I might say that, were Venus to sing, her mode of song would be the *cantabile*; the *portamento* would be that of the Queen of gods and men.

Your Lordship will be sensible, that, though the line between these two classes be distinctly drawn, yet they  
may,

may, more or less, partake, sometimes, of the nature of each other. Some sentiments, for example, of a female lover, all gentleness and sensibility, may yet be accompanied with a degree of nobleness, which, if properly felt by the composer, may induce him to give a grandeur to the music that will make it partake, more than usual, of the stile of the *portamento*: As, on the other hand, circumstances may be imagined in which the most heroic sentiments, from the mixture of some tender affection, may, without losing their dignity, be expressed by strains somewhat more approaching to the *cantabile* than the general character of the air allows: But these, indeed, are  
nice

nice shades of distinction, which escape the controul of fixed rules, and can be appretiated only by correspondent feelings. The peculiar qualities necessary for the proper performance of this air are, first of all, a powerful and beautiful voice ; for, without this, no skill, no taste, no feeling even, can ever render long notes supportable, much less make them a source of delight. Secondly, a clear and unequivocal pronunciation, by virtue of which, notwithstanding the length of the notes, the articulations, with which they began, may be so strongly impressed on the memory, as to render the sense easily followed and understood. Lastly, A graceful manner of acting, without which,



which, in that kind of “ action sou-  
 “ tenue,” which the great length of  
 the notes requires, the deportment of  
 the actor must indeed be aukward in  
 the extreme.

I proceed now to give your Lordship  
 some examples of these airs, beginning  
 with one of the most serious kind,  
 and, by its nature, the farthest removed  
 from the *cantabile* : — It is likewise  
 taken from Metastasio : — In the Ora-  
 torio of *the passion of Christ* :

Dovunque il guardo giro,  
 Immenso Dio, te vedo  
 Nell' opre tue l'ammiro,  
 Te reconosco in me.

Where'er



Where'er I turn my eyes, Great God, I  
 see thee ; I revere thee in thy works ; I feel  
 thee in myself.

La terra, il mar, le sfere  
 Moſtran il tuo potere ;  
 Tu ſei per tutto, e noi  
 Tutti viviamo in te.

The earth, the ſea, the heavens, ſhew forth  
 thy power ; thou art over all, and we all live  
 in thee.

The following example is from the  
 opera of Attilius Regulus, by the ſame  
 author. It is put in the mouth of the  
 Roman Conſul, on hearing Regulus  
 inſiſt on being ſent back to Carthage.

Oh

Oh qual fiamma di glorià e d'onore  
 Sento scorrer per tutte le vene,  
 Alma grande, parlando con te.

Oh ! What a flame of glory and honour I  
 feel run through every vein, thou great soul,  
 in conversing with thee.

No, non vive sì timido core  
 Che in udirti, con quelle catene  
 Non cambiasse la forte d'un re.

No, there lives not a soul so vile, who, hear-  
 ing thee, would not exchange with these chains  
 even the fortune of a monarch.

Here is a third from the same opera :  
 —The daughter of Regulus seeing her  
 father so much occupied by the great  
 I public

public object he had in view, that he appears dead to that paternal fondness which she had before experienced from him, says,—

Ah! father, Why are you so much changed?

To which he answers, closing the recitative,

My fortunes are changed,—I am still the same.

A I R.

Non perdo la calma

Fra i ceppi, o gli allori :

Non va fino all' alma

La mia servitu.

Whether

Whether bound in chains, or encircled with  
laurels, I lose not my serenity, my servitude  
reaches not the soul.

Combatte i rigori  
Di forte inconstante  
In vario sembiante  
L'istessa virtu.

The same virtue, under different appear-  
ances, combats the rigour of inconstant for-  
tune.

LETTER

# THE

AMERICAN

REVIEW

OF

THE

ARTS

AND

THE

SCIENCE

OF

THE

ARTS

AND

THE

SCIENCE

## LETTER VI.

---

MY LORD,

**T**HE *aria di mezzo carattere* comes next to be considered. The subjects proper for this kind of air are many, and very different, its particular character being neither the pathetic, the grand, nor the passionate, but the pleasing. There may be an almost infinite variety of sentiments, very pretty  
and

and very interesting, which are not, however, of sufficient importance to be made the subject either of the *cantabile* or the *portamento*:—The *aria di mezzo carattere* comprehends all such. —From the great variety which this air, of consequence, embraces, as well as from the less emphatic nature of the sentiments to which it belongs, its general expression is not so determined as that of the former classes; yet, with respect to each individual air, the expression is far from being vague or dubious, and though some greater latitude be here granted to the fancy of the composer, nothing is given to his caprice, the sense itself of the words clearly ascertaining, in point both of

degree



degree and quality, the expression. The degree ought to be in exact proportion to the placidity or warmth of the sentiment, and its particular cast ought to be regulated by the nature of that passion to which the sentiment is naturally allied ; for sentiments are but gentler degrees of passion. Thus, this class of airs, whilst it retains its own particular character, may, by turns, have some affinity with almost all the other classes ; but, whilst its latitude is great in respect of variety, its limitations, with regard to degree, are obvious ;—it may be soothing, but not sad ;—it may be pleasing, but not elevated ;—it may be lively, but not gay. The motion of this air is, by the Italians,

lians, termed *andante*, which is the exact medium of musical time between its extremes of slow and quick. As the vocal part is never supposed here to be so beautiful and interesting as in the higher classes, the orchestra, tho' it ought never to cover the voice, is not, however, kept in such subordination to it;—it is not only allowed to play louder, but may be more frequently introduced by itself, and may, on the whole, contribute more to the general effect of the air.

This kind of song is admirably well calculated to give repose and relief to the mind, from the great degree of attention and (with respect to myself, at least,

least, I might say) agitation excited by the higher and more pathetic parts of the piece:—They possess the true character which belongs to the subordinate parts of a beautiful whole, as affording a repose, not the effect of a total want of interest, but of an interest which they call forth of a different and more placid kind, which the mind can attend to with more ease, and can enjoy without being exhausted. I could wish it were in my power to give here three or four examples of this air, the more clearly to evince to your Lordship that this air, whilst it retains perfectly its own peculiar character, may sometimes approach, in its expression, the *cantabile*, sometimes the *portamento*, and

K some-

sometimes the *parlante*,—but having, but one volume of Metastasio by me, I cannot make that selection of examples which I could wish. The following is from the sacred composition of the death of Abel; and, as your Lordship will observe, partakes of the nature of the *cantabile*.—Abel speaks:

Quel buon pastor son io.  
 Che tanto il gregge apprezza,  
 Che, per là sua salvezza,  
 Offre se stesso ancor.

I am that good shepherd, who so loves his flock, that, in defence of it, he offers his own life.

Conosco

Conosco ad una ad una  
Le miè dilette agnelle;  
E riconoscon quelle  
Il tenero pastor.

I know one by one my pretty little lambs;  
and they, in return, know each their tender  
shepherd.

LETTER

# 50

The first part of the book is devoted to a general  
introduction to the subject of the history of the  
United States. It is divided into two parts, the first  
of which is devoted to the history of the United States  
from the first settlement of the country to the  
present time. The second part is devoted to the  
history of the United States from the first settlement  
of the country to the present time.

1877

## L E T T E R VII.

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MY LORD,

**F**ROM what has been said of the foregoing classes, it is evident, that none of them are at all calculated to express any emotion which approaches to agitation. Their peculiar characteristics, dignity, tenderness, elegance, are suitable to the more temperate and finer feelings; their subject, in short, is sentiment rather than passion.



sion. This last, however, affords yet a very wide field for musical expression; and, perhaps, it is not going too far to say, that the more violent the passion, the more apt the expression of it is to receive additional energy from the power of music. The kind of airs which go under the general denomination of *aria parlante* is that whose peculiar province is to express violent emotions of all kinds. As, on the one hand, the necessary connection between the subject of the *portamento*, the *cantabile*, and the *aria di mezzo carattere*, with the respective length of notes, and, of consequence, slowness of measure, which has been mentioned as characteristic of each of these classes, is

is evident; so, on the other hand, the incompatibility of emotions, in any degree violent, with slow and deliberate utterance, is equally evident. The circumstance, from which this class takes its denomination, being the acceleration of speech, common to all emotions whatever of the impetuous kind, it comprehends, of consequence, a vast variety with respect both to quality and degree:—It may be said to take up expression just where the *aria di mezzo carattere* leaves it. Some airs of this last class, of the liveliest cast, may approach indeed so near to some of the *parlante* of the least agitated kind, that it might, perhaps, be difficult to say to which class they belonged; but, as soon

as

as the expression begins to be in any degree impetuous, the distinction is evident, as the degree of passion to be expressed increases the air, assumes the name of *aria agitata*, *aria di strepito*, *aria infuriata*. Expressions of fear, of joy, of grief, of rage, when at all impetuous, to their highest and most frantic degrees, are all comprehended under the various subdivisions of the class.—Their rhythm has its peculiar province, the effect of this kind of airs depending, perhaps, chiefly on its powers. The instrumental parts are here likewise of great efficacy, particularly in the expression of the more violent passions, giving, by the addition of a great body of sound, and by the distinctness

distinctness and rapidity of their execution, a force and energy to the whole, which could never be the effect of a voice alone, however flexible, however powerful ; and if it be allowed, that the beating of a drum has, in consequence of certain principles of sound and rhythm, a considerable effect on the mind, and that ten drums have a proportionably greater effect than one, it must, I apprehend, be also allowed, that sounds more beautiful, and as distinct, nay, infinitely more capable, from their duration, to mark the rhythm by distinguishing pause from length of note, must have a similar effect on the mind, —finer, however, and more powerful, in proportion to their superior beauty,

L

accu-

accuracy, and other advantages. The instruments here, far from being restricted to the mere support of the voice, are called in to co-operate with it in producing one and the same effect, but with greater power than that which could be produced by the voice alone.

I am well aware, it may be objected here, that the greater the force of the instruments the more they will be apt to overpower the voice, and, of consequence, to destroy the principal source of expression, namely, the sense of connection between the words and the notes; and, perhaps, it may not be very easy to convince those, who are  
not

not conversant with music, how it is possible this should not be the case. All those, however, who have been accustomed to hear good music well performed, will be satisfied, on recollection, that, in this kind of airs, they have often heard a very numerous orchestra exert all its powers, without in the least covering the voice, or disguising the sense : And the reason is simply this, that what is called the “ fortissimo,” or extreme force of the orchestra, is not continued uniformly throughout the accompaniment, which would, indeed, have the effect of completely drowning the voice,—but that this extreme exertion is instantaneously called forth, either in those particu-  
lar



lar notes which are peculiarly significant of the rhythm, such as the first of the bar, &c. or on some note or notes where the sense itself requires it; after which the *piano* or *burst* of the orchestra immediately takes place, bearing the voice, excepting in such instantaneous lightnings of sound, if I may be allowed the expression, eminently superior throughout, nor ever playing for any length of time with the same continued, or with increasing force, excepting in the case of some climax in the expression, where the words have either been already heard, or in which, at least, their sense, even were they not distinctly heard, cannot, from the general tenor of the air, be mistaken.

This



This extraordinary swell from all the parts of the orchestra is, in general, practised with great success at the conclusion of such airs, in which, supposing the words even not to be understood, (any further than they can be guessed at from the context, and by the action of the speaker), the effect they are intended to have on the audience is more happily obtained than it could be by the clear articulation of them, unaccompanied by that torrent of passion, if I may so speak, which may be produced by this united exertion of all the instrumental parts.—For it must be likewise observed that passion, when very violent, is expressed not so much by the words of the speaker

er

er as by other signs,—the tones of the voice, the action of the face, and the gesture ; infomuch, that I am confident I have heard many airs of this kind, in which, had the actor, without speaking a note, looked and acted his part with propriety, nobody would have been at a loss to judge either of the kind or of the degree of passion by which he seemed actuated. Rousseau, somewhere in his works, makes a very ingenious observation, the truth of which the Italian composers seem evidently to have felt, —That, as violent passion has a tendency to choak the voice, so, in the expression of it by musical sounds, a *roulade*, which is a regular succession of notes up or down, or both, rapidly

pro-

pronounced on one vowel, has often a more powerful effect than distinct articulation:—Such passages are sometimes introduced in airs of this kind; and, though I cannot help giving my assent to Rousseau's observation, yet I must, at the same time, confess, that they are too apt to be abused, and that, if continued for any length of time, they have always appeared to me unnatural. Upon the whole, I hope, however, it must be evident, even to those who are not conversant with music, that, in the expression of the more violent passions, the instrumental parts may have a greater latitude than in other kinds of airs, in which the emotions being more moderate, the expression

sion of them depends proportionally more on the force of the words, and less on the tone and action with which they are accompanied. But, whatever may be the effect of airs of this kind, when properly led by the circumstances of the piece and explained by the character of the speaker, your Lordship must see with what impropriety they are introduced, as is frequently the case, in our concerts, where, without the audience being apprised either of the interest of the piece, or the nature of the characters, they are sung by a fellow standing bolt upright, with one hand in his side, and the other in his breeches-pocket, and where, into the bargain, the unmerciful scrapers of our orchestra

orchestra, taking the advantage of the *fortissimo*, which they find now and then written above the notes of their parts, seem to vie with one another, who shall most effectually overpower, throughout, both the voice of the singer, and the melody of the song. It is this kind of ignorant selection, and murderous execution, which give sensible people a distaste to Italian music in general; nor can they surely be blamed for thinking it absurd, that a man should say what cannot, in the nature of things, be heard, and that all that violent fracas and noise of instruments is a most ridiculous accompaniment to the affected immobility and unmeaning simper of the singer.

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But to return to the subject;—your Lordship will perceive, that between those most violent expressions, and those that are least so, which this class comprehends, there must be an almost infinite variety, in respect both of kind and degree. I shall, therefore, content myself with giving your Lordship examples of the principal divisions only, and shall begin by that kind which I mentioned before as taking up expression, where the *aria di mezzo carattere* leaves it, and as being of this nature, that it might even be sometimes difficult to decide which of these classes it belonged to.



Del sen gli ardori  
 Nessun mi vanti :  
 Non soffro amori ;  
 Non voglio amanti ;  
 Troppo miè cara  
 La libertà.

Let no one boast to me the ardours of his  
 bosom : I suffer not loves ; I am adverse to  
 lovers ; my liberty is too dear to me.

Se fosse ognuno  
 Così sincero,  
 Meno importuno  
 Sarrebbe il vero  
 Saria poi rara  
 L' infedeltà.

If every one were as sincere, truth would  
 be less offensive, and infidelity more rare.

If



If the words of this air were put in the mouth of a gay young girl, thus carefully signifying her insensibility to love and her desire of liberty, it might with propriety be so composed as to rank with the *Airs di mezzo carattere*, and would be well expressed by that pleasing, though unimpassioned, cantileno, which is characteristic of that class. But if, on the other hand, we suppose them spoken with a degree of earnestness to an importunate lover, in order to get rid of him, it must, in that case, certainly be so composed as to belong to the first division of the *aria parlante*.

In the following example no such uncertainty can take place, the degree of passion, or of interest, at least, expressed by it, referring it plainly to this last class : Achilles speaks it, about to leave Deidamia :

Dille che si consoli,  
 Dille che m' ami e dille,  
 Che partì fido Achille  
 Che fido tornerà.

Tell her to be comforted ; tell her to love me ; and tell her, that Achilles left her faithful, that faithful he will return.

Che a suoi bei occhi soli  
 Fia che 'l mio cor si stempre  
 Che l' idol mio fù sempre  
 Che l' idol mio farà.

That

That her charms alone shall have the sovereignty of my heart ; that she ever was, that she ever shall, be my only love.

In order to be as explicit as possible, I shall give your Lordship two other examples from the same piece, which, with regard to the expression, seem nearly equal in degree, though widely different in kind.—Deidamia, reproaching Achilles for want of affection, says :

No, ingrato, amor non senti ;  
 O se pur senti amore,  
 Perder non vuoi del cor,  
 Per me la pace.

No, ungrateful ! thou feelest not love ; or if, indeed, thou feelest it, thou art not willing, for my sake, to lose the peace of thy bosom.

Amai ;

Amai; se te 'l rammenti,  
E puoi senza penar,  
Amare e difamar  
Quando ti piace.

Perhaps thou lovest; but remember, thou  
can'st not love, and, without pain, cease to  
love at pleasure.

The other is put in the mouth of  
Achilles, on his suspicion of being de-  
prived of his mistress by a rival:

Il volarmi il mio tesoro!  
Ah dov' è quest' alma ardita?  
A da togliermi la vita  
Che vuol togliermi il mio ben.

Rob me of my treasure! Ah, where is this  
pre-

presumptuous soul? He must first take my life  
who would rob me of my love.

M' avvilisce in queste spoglie  
Il poter di due pupille ;  
Ma lo so ch'io sono Achille,  
Ma mi sento Achille in sen.

The power of too bright eyes disgraces me  
in these weeds ; but I know—I feel, that I am  
Achilles.

Though the general acceleration of  
speech common to each of these *Airs*,  
and which, therefore, brings them un-  
der the same class, be, perhaps, nearly  
equal in both, yet the skilful composer  
will nicely discriminate, not only be-  
tween the warlike audacity of Achilles,  
and

and the feminine softness of Dudanio, but also between the expression of disappointed affection in the former, and of jealous resentment in the latter.

I beg leave to offer the two following examples also, as approaching, in degree, to the foregoing, though very different in kind; the first partaking somewhat of the tenderness which is characteristic of the *cantabile*; the second of the dignity which belongs to the *portamento*.

Parto, non ti fdegnar ;  
 Si madre mia da te ;  
 Gli affetti a moderar  
 Quest' alma impara.

I go, be not offended; yes, my mother, I go; this soul shall learn from thee to moderate its affections.

Gran Colpa pur non è  
 Se mal frenar si può,  
 Un figlio che perdè  
 Un figlio che trovò  
 Si cara madre.

Surely it is no heinous fault that a son cannot easily command himself, who lost, who found, so dear a mother.

In the following Air, Xerxes, on being reconciled to Themistocles, thus addresses him :

Contrasto assai più degno,  
 Se vuoi, comincerà ;

Or



Or che la gloria in noi  
L'odio in amor cambio.

A much nobler combat, if thou wilt, shall  
commence betwixt us ; now that glory has  
changed our hatred into love.

Scordati tu lo sdegno  
Jo le vendette obbligo  
Tú mio sostegno ed io  
Tuo difensor farò.

Forget there thy enmity, I will bury in ob-  
livion my resentment ; thou shalt be my sup-  
port, I will be thy protector.

In the following examples, the vio-  
lence of the expression being increased,  
the music assumes the denomination of  
*aria agitata*.

L'alma

L'alma delira,  
 Par che manchino  
 Quasi i respiri,  
 Che fuor del petto  
 Mi balza il cor.

My soul grows delirious with excessive joy;  
 I pant for breath, my heart seems to jump  
 from my bosom.

Quant' è piu facile  
 Ch'un gran diletto  
 Giunga ad uccidere  
 Che un gran dolor.

How much more apt is excess of joy to kill,  
 than excess of grief.

I cannot pass by this example, how-  
 ever, without observing to your Lord-  
 ship,

ship, that the second part of the Air, is by no means proper for musical expression: It ceases to be the language of passion; and is, besides, a reflection which no person, in such a state as the first part indicates, would naturally make. In setting the Opera to Music, a judicious composer would strike it out altogether. The next example, though evidently different, with regard to the kind of expression, belongs to the same sub-division of this class.

Gia l'idea del giusto scempio  
 Mi rapisce, mi diletta,  
 Gia pensando alla vendetta  
 Mi commincio a vendicar.

Already

Already the idea of the just slaughter delights me ; already, thinking of my vengeance, I begin to be revenged.

Gia quel barbaro quel empio  
Fa di fangue il fuol vermiglio  
Ed il fangue del mio figlio  
Gia fi fente rin facciar.

I fee the impious wretch already dye the earth with his blood ; already the murder of my fon stares him in the face.

The examples I am next to give your Lordship, are of that kind which takes the name of *aria di fmanie* ; for which I do not recollect any phrafe in English exactly equivalent : It is an appellation given to the expreffion of fuch emotions as take away, in fome degree,

degree, the right use of reason, and begin to border on insanity.

Non vedi tiranno  
Ch' io moro d'affanno  
Che bramo che in pace  
Mi lasci morir.

Seest thou not, tyrant, that I die of grief,  
and only wish thou wouldst suffer me to die in  
peace.

Ch'o l'alma si oppressa  
Che tutto mi spiace,  
Che quasi me stessa  
Non posso soffrir.

That my soul is so oppressed, that every  
thing is hateful to me, that I can no longer  
suffer even myself.

Dimmi

Dìmmi crudel dov' è:

Ah non tacer così.

Barbaro Ciel perchè

Infino a questo di

Serbarmi in vita.

Tell me cruel—Where is she? Ah do not thus be silent, barbarous Heaven! Ah, Why didst thou prolong my life to this day.

Corrafi—Ah! dove? oh Dei!

Chi guida e passi miei

Chi, almen, chi, per mercè

La via m' addita.

Let me run,—Where? oh God! Who will guide my steps; who, for pity's sake, will direct me?

Recitative.

## R E C I T A T I V E.

—Fuggi Sebaſte, ah dove  
 Fuggiro da me ſteſſo? ah porto in ſeno  
 Il carneſice mio : dovunque vada  
 Il terror, lo ſpavento  
 Seguiran la mia traccia  
 La colpa mia, mi ſtarà ſempre in faccia.

Fly Sebaſte—ah whither ſhall I fly from  
 myſelf? Alas! I carry in my boſom my exe-  
 cutioner; wherever I go horror follows my  
 ſteps; my guilt muſt ever ſtare me in the face.

## A I R.

Aſpri remorſi atroci  
 Figli del fallo mio  
 Perche ſi tardi, oh Dio!  
 Mi lacerate il cor.

O

Cruel



Cruel heart-rending remorse, offspring of  
my crime ; Why, oh God, so late dost thou  
tear my bosom ?

Perche funeste voci,  
Ch'or mi sgriate appresso,  
Perche vi ascolto adesso,  
Ne v'ascoltar fin or ?

Ye fatal voices, which now howl around  
me, if deaf to you hitherto, why do I listen  
to you now ?

The last division of this class of airs  
is that which is adapted to the expres-  
sion of passion, of whatever kind, when  
become frantic ; and is properly termed  
*aria infuriata*.

R E C I -

RECITATIVE.

—Non più, Mandane,  
Il mio furor mi avanza,  
Non ispirarmi il tuo, fremo abbastanza.

—No more, Mandane, inspire me not  
with thine, my own fury is sufficient.

A I R.

Men bramofa di ſtragi funeſte,  
Va ſcorrendo l'Armene foreſte  
Fera tigre che i figli perdè.

With leſs thirſt for blood and ſlaughter, the  
fierce tyger, robbed of its young, ſcours the  
Armenian foreſts.

Ardo d'ira, di rabbia deliro  
Smanio, fremo, non odo, non miro  
Che le furie che porto con me.

My

My wrath consumes me, I rave, I rage, I  
 hear and see nothing but the furies, which I  
 carry with myself.

Rendimi il figlio mio :

Ah ! Mi si spezza il cor ;

Non son piu madre, oh Dio ;

Non ò piu figlio.

Give me back my son ;—oh, my heart  
 bursts ;—no longer am I a mother ;—oh God,  
 my child is no more.

Fra mille furori

Che calma non anno,

Fra mille timori

Che intorno mi stanno,

Accender mi sento,

Mi sento gelar.

Surrounded

Surrounded by a thousand furies which know no calm, by a thousand terrors which incessantly pursue me, by turns I freeze, I burn.

I hope I have been able, by the foregoing examples, to give your Lordship some idea of the nature, extent, and variety of this class of airs, as well as of the reason why so great a variety is comprehended under the same general denomination; a circumstance which, without due attention to its cause, would appear absurd and contradictory. Before I conclude, it is proper to take notice to your Lordship, that the words of an air may be so written, as to afford subject for two, or even three, of the classes hitherto mentioned,

mentioned, not in a mixed manner, but severally, of which my memory furnishes me with the following example:

Pria ch'io rieda al campo,  
 Pensa ch'io son Romano ;  
 Che d'una spada il lampo,  
 No, non mi fa terror.

Before I return to the camp, remember I am a Roman ; that I rejoice in danger of battle.

Spofa, Signor, che affanno !  
 Deh tergi i vaghi rai  
 Che fol nel dirti addio  
 Vacilla il mio valor.

Spouse,—Sir,—what misery !—for pity's  
 sake

fake dry up these tears ; only, in bidding thee  
adieu, my constancy is shaken.

Empio destin tiranno :

O cento smanie in seno,

O cento furie al cor.

Cruel, barbarous fate ; a thousand torments  
rend my bosom ; I have a thousand furies in  
my heart.

This air, your Lordship sees, is di-  
vided into three different parts ; the  
first of which, expressing dignity of  
sentiment, belongs to the *portamento* ;  
the second, expressing tenderness, to  
the *cantabile* ; and the third, expressing  
rage, to the last division of the *aria*  
*parlante*.

L E T T E R





## LETTER VIII.

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MY LORD,

FROM what I have said of the *aria di portamento*, the *cantabile*, the *mezzo carattere*, and the different sub-divisions of the *aria parlante*, I hope I have, in some degree, made it plain to your Lordship, that there is no affection of the human breast, from the slightest and most gentle stirring of sentiment, to the most frantic degrees of

P                      passion,

passion, which some one of these classes is not aptly suited to express. If this be true, other classes must be either bad or superfluous: This, in fact, is the case of the *aria di agilità*, or *aria di bravura*, as it is sometimes called; in treating of which, it will be almost sufficient to repeat to your Lordship the description I gave of it in the general enumeration of the different classes: It is an air composed *chiefly*, indeed too often *merely*, to indulge the singer in the display of certain powers in the execution, particularly extraordinary agility or compass of voice. In such a composition, the *means* are evidently confounded with the *end* of the art; dexterity, (if I may be allowed

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ed the expression), and artifice, instead of serving as the instruments, being made the object of the work : Such are the airs which, with us, we so frequently observe sung to ears erect, and gaping mouths, whilst the heart, in honest apathy, is carrying on its mere animal function : And of this kind, indeed, are all the attempts, in the different arts, to substitute what is difficult or novel for what is beautiful and natural. Where there has ever been a genuine taste for any of the arts, this aptness to admire what is new and difficult is one of the first symptoms of the decline of that taste ; such is at present the case in Italy with respect to all the arts ; but the admiration bestowed

flowed in Britain on difficulty and novelty, in preference to beauty and simplicity, is the effect, not of the decline, but of the total want of taste, and proceeds from the same principles with the admiration of tumbling and rope-dancing, which the multitude may gaze on with astonishment long before they are susceptible of the charms of graceful and elegant pantomime, these feats of agility having exactly the same relation to fine dancing that the above mentioned airs have to expressive music: They are, therefore, I conceive, incompatible with the nature of a serious drama; but in the burletta, or comic opera, in which much greater liberties may be taken, I think I have,

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sometimes, heard them introduced with success. In a comedy, a pretty frolicsome coquette may be supposed to cut an elegant caper, at once to show her legs and to display her skill in dancing; nay, such a stroke might be characteristic, and therefore proper: So a gay fashionable lady might, with a kind of graceful levity, express, by an air of this kind, some of her pretty capricious humours, equally unintelligible with the music itself, the merit of both consisting merely in the prettiness of the *manner*; for this kind of music, tho' incapable of any expression excepting that, perhaps, of gaiety in general, may yet have all the beauty which can be given to it by a fine voice running,  
with

with ease and velocity, though an arrangement of notes, not in itself unpleasing, just as the humour of the lady, though perhaps rather unmeaning, may be accompanied with many graces of countenance, figure, voice, and motion.

Now, the union of all this with the music, produces often, without any violation of propriety, a very happy effect on the stage; but your Lordship will observe with what absurd impropriety these airs often make a part of our concerts, where all this elegant flirtation of face and figure is forbidden, and where these fanciful and exuberant sallies are gravely pronounced  
by

by a lady standing at the harpsicord with downcast, or, at best, unmeaning eyes, and without the smallest apparent tendency to motion.

LETTER





LETTER IX.

MY LORD,

I HAVE now endeavoured to give your Lordship as distinct an idea as I could of the simple and accompanied Recitative, and of all those classes of *Airs* which have names in Italian, and which I mentioned in the first general enumeration I made of them. There is, however, another species of *Airs*, which I have not classed with

Q *them,*

them, because it has no particular denomination, though it appears to me well deserving of that distinction: But this is easily accounted for, when it is considered, as I took occasion to observe in the beginning, that the names of these classes are all taken from circumstances of the practical part of the art. The *Airs* alluded to here are those whose subject is a simile, and which I shall venture to call *Airs of Imitation*: These, though essentially different from all those before mentioned, yet, from some circumstance of similarity in the practical part, have been referred to one or other of the above classes.

Though,

Though, upon the whole, similes of any length be perhaps seldom admissible in dramatic poetry, being in general repugnant to the genuine expression of passion, yet sometimes they may be introduced without impropriety, more particularly in the musical drama, which, like all the other arts, justly claims some license in practice, with respect to that beauty which is its chief object, or that species of pleasure which it is peculiarly calculated to inspire.

Now, the greatest possible variety of musical effect being exactly the perfection of this kind of drama, and those *Airs* which have for their subject a simile, by giving scope to the descriptive powers

powers of Music, being a source of great beauty and variety to the piece, a more frequent introduction of similes may, on this principle, be allowed in the opera than in dramatic works, unaccompanied by music. Before I proceed to give your Lordship any examples of this Air, I beg leave to say something on the principle of Musical Imitation in general. And, first, it is evident, that, besides the relations of acute and grave, of loud and soft, of continuous and discontinuous, which are simply the same in noise of all kinds, as in musical sounds, there are many circumstances of resemblance between these last and other sounds, for some of which we have not even names. The  
 sound

found of a little flute, for example, resembles the singing of birds, not from its shrillness merely, but on account of a certain quality of sound common to both, which every ear is sensible of, but which we have no words to express. It is by this quality of sound that we distinguish the voices of persons, though speaking, perhaps nearly on the same pitch, and discriminate different instruments while playing the same musical notes; and the Italians have, therefore, very properly termed it *il metallo della voce*. Again, motion in bodies, though not common to motion in music, in all its extent, is, in some respects, the same; in others similar, or at least analogous: Slow and quick, with regard

gard to succession, with all the possible degrees between their perceptible extremes, are common to both : The same may be said of regular and irregular ; and, where these fail, analogies can be affected by different means, as striking as circumstances of positiveness or resemblance. Gliding, as it is sometimes practised, both by the voice and by certain instruments, is the same in music as in bodies, it being in reality the effect of that motion in some body acting on another. The notes of music, however, being each, by its nature, stationary, cannot, strictly speaking, be said to glide ; yet the idea of a gliding motion is easily conveyed by a certain arrangement of notes :

In



In the same manner, soaring, sinking, and even level motion, are equally easily expressed; and though, to be sure, a note cannot be said to turn or run round like a body, yet a succession of notes may be found that may give an idea of circular motion, the difference between these motions in music and in bodies being something like the difference between these circles



Setting aside then the more obscure analogies in music, which are felt, perhaps, only in consequence of a certain  
orga-

organization, or a degree of imagination not common to all men, it is surely evident, that resemblances or analogies may be produced, by means of sounds, and of their rythm and arrangement, to every thing in nature, which we perceive in consequence of sound and motion : Thus the whistling of the winds, the noise of thunder, the roaring and dashing of the sea, the murmurs of a stream, the whispers of the breeze,—the solemn waving of a lofty pine, the forked motion and momentary appearance of lightning, the grand swell of a billow, the rapidity of a torrent, the meanders of a rivulet, or the smooth gliding of a silent stream, must, even to those who have not a musical

musical ear, appear all within the compass of musical imitation; for this plain reason, that positive resemblance is, in fact, the ground of this imitation. Nor does the analogy seem much strained, when we say that music may imitate the tread of a giant, the light and nimble footsteps of a nymph, or even the motion of those fanciful beings whom Shakespeare has described as “chasing, with printless feet, the eb-  
 “bing Neptune.” But the imitation of which music is capable is not stinted to such positive resemblances as those now cited; general ideas of hugeness and immensity, of lightness and elegance, of operations that are performed with difficulty or with facility, of or-  
 R der,

der, of confusion, of exertion, of repose, of energy, of debility, of similarity, of discrepancy, of union, of incompatibility, and many more, may be clearly conveyed by different qualities, modifications, arrangements, rythm, and combinations of musical sounds. With respect to the more distant and obscure analogies, such as that to cold, light, darkness, pain, and the like, as, to those who are less sensible of the effects of music, they may seem to originate rather in the enthusiasm of the hearer than in any reality in the art, I shall not insist on them.

I hope, upon the whole, your Lordship will agree with me that it is evident

dent that there are sufficient grounds to go upon to justify the attempt of imitative music as distinct from passionate ; and that the introduction of airs of this last kind must, in consequence of the variety they give, tend to beautify the whole, and render it more complete. I must confess, however, that I have often seen them used too frequently in the same piece ; and that the effect of them can never be completely fine when they are not dictated by, and accompanied throughout, with some sentiment or passion of the speaker.—The following is an example in point.

R E C I-

## RECITATIVE.

—In ogni sorte

L'istessa è la virtù ; l'agita è vero,

Il nemico destin, ma non l'opprime ;

E quando e men felice, è piu sublime.

In every state virtue is the same ; adverse fate, it is true, agitates, but cannot oppress it ; and when it is least happy, it is then most sublime.

## A I R.

Quercia annosa, su l'erte pendici,

Fra il contrasto di venti nemici,

Piu sicura, piu salda si fa.

The knotted oak, which, high on the rugged cliffs, braves the contending winds, becomes by them more firm and more secure.

Che

Che s'el verno di chiome le sfronda,  
 Più nel suolo col piè si profonda,  
 Forza aquista, se perde belta.

And if the winter despoils it of its leaves,  
 it makes it sink deeper in the earth its roots,  
 and it acquires strength in proportion as it  
 loses beauty.

In the foregoing example, the image  
 of the oak itself on the high cliffs, the  
 raging of the winds, and the dignity  
 of the sentiment in the speaker, all  
 conspire to produce the same effect of  
 grandeur. But I have seen airs, in  
 which the subject of the passionate part  
 was different from that of the imitative,  
 so contrived, as to keep each most di-  
 stinctly separate from the other, whilst,  
 at



at the same time, the union of both made one beautiful whole. Handel, in his Oratorio of *Acis and Galatea*, has produced a master-stroke of this kind.—*Galatea*, addressing herself to the birds that are supposed to be singing around her, says,

Hush, hush, ye little warbling quire,  
Your thrilling strains  
Awake my pains,  
And kindle fierce desire.

In this example, there is no comparison made; the imitative part is only suggested by the sense, and the composer has taken the hint in adapting the music to it, and has indeed done  
it

it with the utmost propriety as well as ingenuity. It is plain, in this air, that, if the imitation of any thing is to be at all attempted, it must be that of the warbling quire: And it is as plain, that the passionate expression of the speaker has not even the most distant relation to the singing of birds; —to have set the voice a singing, in imitation of the birds, or, whilst the voice sang the passionate part, to have made the birds sing either in unison, or in direct harmony, with the voice, would have been each equally absurd. It would seem, indeed, at first sight, almost impossible to reconcile two things so different; yet this great genius, by confining each part to its proper

per province, has so artfully managed the composition, that, whilst the vocal part most feelingly speaks the passion, a little flagellet from the orchestra carries on, throughout, the delightful warbling of the quire, and though perfectly different in sound, melody, and rythm, from the notes sung by the voice, instead of distracting the attention from it, or confounding the expression, serves to add new beauty and grace to the effect; just as your Lordship may conceive a naked figure so veiled with some light and transparent vestment floating to the wind, as at once completely to reveal the figure, and, by its undulating folds, add new charms both to the motion and the form.

form. Nothing can put in a stronger light the discrimination which I before made to your Lordship, of the passionate and imitative powers of music, than the above mentioned air, or more clearly evince the propriety of assigning the first to the voice alone, and of confining the instruments to the other only. This principle, indeed, long before it was perhaps ever thought of, either by philosophers or composers, must have been generally felt; and even the powers of the great Handel could not compensate its violation in composition; for, in the very same opera, a little after, when Galatea is made to convert Acis into a stream, and, after the symphony has made a

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fine

fine imitation of the winding of the stream through the vale, he makes Galatea repeat it with her voice ; and, though the music of the air be, in other respects, beautiful in the extreme, yet I do not believe it was ever performed without appearing tedious, even to those who never dreamed of this principle ; and, to those who were acquainted with it, at once tedious and absurd.

In the first example I gave your Lordship of these airs of imitation, the comparison is itself the subject, and the nature of the sentiment coinciding perfectly with it, only serves to increase, perhaps, the general pathos, without forming,

forming, in any degree, a separate subject.—The second contains plainly a double subject, contrived with wonderful art to go on together, to set off each other, and to form one beautiful whole. There is still a third kind of these airs, that holds a middle place between those two, in which, there being no express comparison, the imitative part, as in the last, is only suggested by the words, but being, as in the first, of the same quality, as it were, with the sentiment, does not make the immediate subject of the music, but is kept subordinate to the expression of the passion or sentiment. The following air is of this species :

*Intendo*

Intendo, amico rio;  
 Quel basso mormorio  
 Tu chiedi in tua favella  
 Il nostro ben dov' è.

I understand thee, gentle river; in that plaintive murmur, thou inquirest with me where our love is gone.

As the comparisons which make the subject of these airs, or, as the objects of which they only suggest the imitation, may be sublime, elegant, gay, boisterous, &c. so they may severally have a relation to some one or other of the classes before mentioned, the *portamento*, the *cantabile*, the *mezzo carattere*, and the different divisions of the *aria parlante*,—and, of conse-

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quence, may be referred to them; the division which I have made of music into passionate and imitative being rather of a philosophical kind, whilst that by which the Italians have formed the different classes of their airs originates, as I have said, in circumstances of practice only. So just is their division, that, to give a distinct idea of any of these airs, we must say it is an air of imitation of the *portamento* stile, or of the *cantabile*, &c.

F I N I S.







